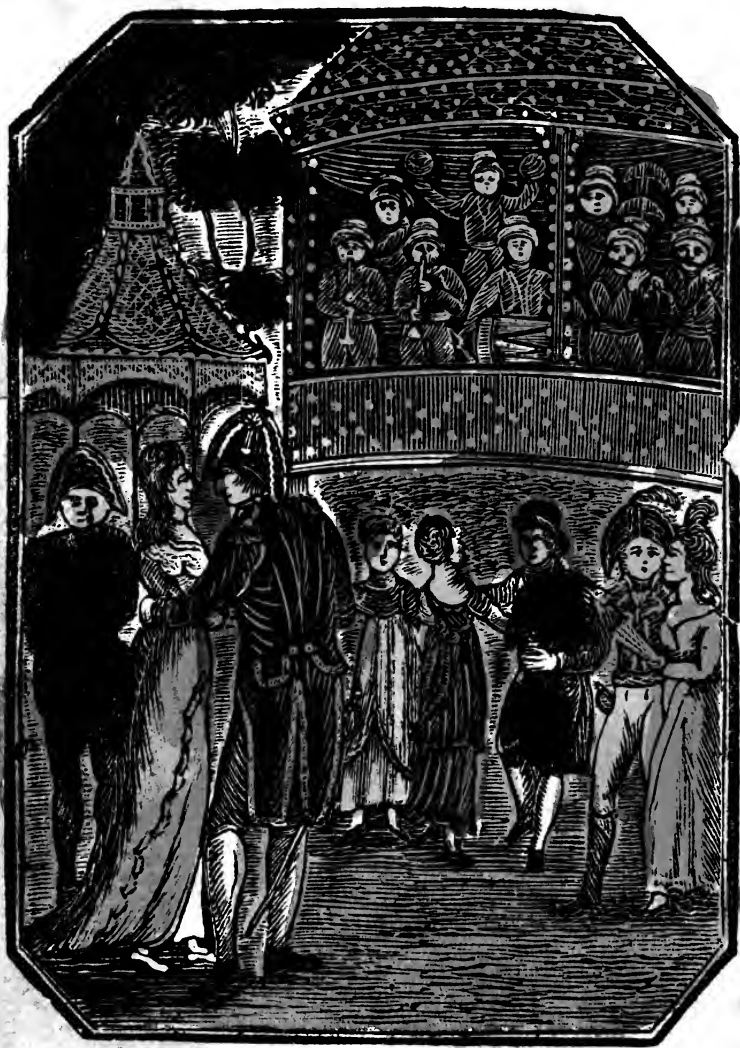


FRONTISPIECE.

Try these my dear, what better we can
I make of my fortune than to employ
it in what pleases you.—See Page 7.

FRONTISPIECE.



Pr'ythee, my dear, what better use can I make of my fortune than to employ it in what pleases you.—See Page 7.

THE
SPECIOUS FRIEND :
OR
A WIFE
OF
TEN THOUSAND.

A
MORAL TALE.

BY MARMONTEL.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY AND FOR EDWARD PECK,
LOWER-ROUSEGATE.

(Price Six-pence.)

A

WIFE of TEN THOUSAND.

A

MORAL TALE.

THIS, near eight years ago, was the language of the haughty Melidor to his wife. 'Enjoy, Madam, all the comforts of your house; do the honours, and be the delight of it; but never trouble your head about the conduct of it.' The advice was agreeable to follow; and accordingly the young and lively Acelia had pretty well followed it. But reason came with age, and the kind of intoxication in which she had been plunged, vanished.

Melidor had the misfortune to be born in opulence. Brought up among the young nobility of the kingdom, invested on entering into the world with a considerable charge, master of his wealth from the age of reason; it became to him the age of follies. His prevailing foible was, to want to live like a man of quality. He made himself familiar with the great, carefully

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studied their manners ; and as the noble and simple graces of a true courtier, are not easy to imitate, it was to the airs of our little lords that he attached himself, as to good models.

He would have thought it a disgrace, not to to have been able to say, *My domains, and my vassals* : he laid out, therefore, the better part of his ready money in the purchase of lands; the revenue of which was small indeed, but the rights whereof were magnificent.

He had heard say, that the great lords had stewards who robbed them, creditors whom they did not pay, and mistresses who were not very faithful ; he considered it, therefore, as beneath him to look into his accounts, to pay his debts, or to be delicate in love.

His eldest son had scarce attained his seventh year ; he took particular care to chuse him a governor that was self-sufficient and a coxcomb, who had no other merit than that of making a handsome bow.

This governor was the dependant of an humble friend of Melidor's, called Duranson, naturally an insolent, low fellow ; a kind of dog, who barked at all passers-by, and caressed only his master. The part he acted was that of a misanthrope, full of arrogance and moroseness. Rich, but covetous, he found it convenient to have a good house which was not his own, and pleasures of every sort of which another bore the expence. A silent observer of all that passed, one might see him sunk in his armed-chair, deciding on every thing with a few cutting words, and setting himself up as a family censor. Woe to the good man who was not an object of fear!

He tore him to pieces without mercy, if his air had displeased him ever so little.

Melidor took the moroseness of Duranson for philosophy. He was conscious that he was his hero; and the incense of a man of his character was to him a delicate perfume. The rough flatterer took care not to expose himself in the world. If he applauded Melidor in public, it was only with a glance, or complaisant smile: he kept his panegyrick, for a *tete-a-tete*; but then he gave him a full meal of it. Melidor could scarce believe himself endowed with such eminent merit; but there must be something in it, for his friend Duranson, who assured him of it, was the farthest in the world from being a nauseous flatterer.

It was not enough to please the husband; Duranson had also flattered himself with seducing the young wife. He began by speaking well of her alone, and very ill of all others of her age and condition. But she was as little touched with his satires as his encomiums. He suspected that he was despised; he endeavoured to make himself dreaded, and by some malignant and sharp strokes, he made her perceive, that it was at any time in his power to be severe even on herself. That succeeded no better. 'I may have foibles,' said she to him, 'and I allow them to be attacked, but at a little more distance, if you please. A perpetual censor would be almost as tiresome to me as a servile flatterer.'

By the resolute tone which she assumed, Duranson saw plainly, that, in order to reduce her, he must go a little farther about. 'Let me endeavour,' said he, 'to make her stand in need of

me: let me afflict her in order to console her; and when her wounded vanity shall throw her off her guard, I will seize one of those moments of disgust. The confidant of a woman's sorrows is often the happy avenger of them.'

'I pity you, Madam,' said he; 'and I ought no longer to conceal from you, what afflicts me sensibly. For some time past Melidor goes astray; he is guilty of follies; and if he goes on in this manner, he will no longer have occasion for such a friend as myself.'

Whether it was levity or dissimulation with a man whom she did not esteem, Acelia received this information without deigning to appear moved. He dwelt upon it, made a merit of his own zeal, and declaimed against the caprices and irregularities of husbands of the age; said that he had made Melidor blush at it; and opposing the charms of Acelia to the dowdies which touched her husband, he grew so very warm, that he forgot his part, and soon betrayed himself. She smiled with disdain, at the knave's want of address. 'That is what I call a friend,' said she, 'and not these base adulators, whom vice keeps in pay, in order to flatter and serve it. I am very sure, for example, that you have told Melidor to his face, all that you have just now said to me.'—'Yes, Madam, and a great deal more.'—'You will, then, to be sure, have the courage to reproach him with his wrongs before me; to overwhelm him with them.'—'Before you, Madam! Ah, beware of making a noise! that would be to alienate him irrecoverably. He is proud; he will be hurt at having cause to blush before you. He would

consider me only as a perfidious friend. And who knows to what hidden motive he would impute our correspondence?'—'No matter; I will convict him, and confront him, in you, with a witness whom he cannot disprove.'—'No, Madam, no; you will be undone. It is by dissembling wrongs that a woman governs: discretion, gentleness, and your charms, these are your advantages over us. Complaint and reproach serve only to exasperate us; and of all the methods of correcting, the worst is to put us to confusion.' He was in the right, but to no purpose. Acelia would hear nothing. 'I know,' said she, 'all my risk, but though it were to come to a rupture, I would not act, by my silence, the convenient woman to my husband.' He strove in vain to dissuade her; he was reduced to ask her pardon, and to entreat her not to punish him for a zeal which, perhaps, was imprudent. 'And this, then,' said Acelia, 'is that courageous freedom of yours which nothing can intimidate? I shall be more discreet than you; but remember Duranson, never hereafter to say any thing of your friends that you would not have them hear again. As to me, whatever injury my husband does me, I forbid you ever to speak to me about it.'

Duranson, enraged at so scurvy a reception, vowed the destruction of Acelia; but it was necessary first to involve her in the ruin of her husband. Nobody at Paris has so many friends as an opulent and prodigal man. Melidor's friends, at his suppers, never failed to commend him to his face; and they had the kindness to wait till they were withdrawn from table, before they ridiculed

him. His creditors, who daily increased were not so complaisant; but his friend, Duranson, kept off the throng. He knew, he said, the way to impose on those knaves. However, as they were not all equally timid, there was a necessity from time to time, in order to appease the most turbulent, to have recourse to expedients; and Duranson, under a fictitious name, coming to the succour of his friend, lent him money on pledges, on the most usurious contracts.

The more Melidor's affairs became disordered, the less he wished to hear of them. 'Manage it, said he to his steward; 'I will sign, but leave me at peace.' At last his steward came to tell him that his capital was exhausted, and his effects were going to be seized. Melidor fell on his agent, and told him was a rogue. 'Call me what you please,' replied the cool steward, 'but you are in debt, and must pay; and because you fail, they are going to sue you.'

Melidor ordered the faithful Duranson to be called, and asked him if he had no resource. 'You have one very sure one: let your wife engage herself.'—'Ah! but will she consent to it?'—'To be sure, can she hesitate, when your honour is at stake? However, do not alarm her; treat the matter as a trifle, and let her see in this engagement nothing more than a common form, which she cannot avoid fulfilling.'—Melidor embraced his friend, and repaired to his wife.

Acelia, wholly devoted to her amusements, knew nothing of what passed. But, happily, Heaven had endued her with a just way of thinking, and a firm soul. 'I am just come, Madam,'

said her husband, 'from seeing your new carriage: it will be exquisite. Your new horses are arrived. Ah, my dear, what a beautiful set! the Count De Pifa trains them. They are full of spirit; but he will break them: he is the best driver in all Paris.'

Though Acelia was accustomed to the gallantries of her husband, she could not help being surprized and pleased with this last. 'I ruin you!' said she. 'Pr'ythee, my dear, what better use can I make of my fortune than to employ it in what pleases you? Give a loose to your desires, and enjoy them at your ease. I have nothing which is not at your service; and I flatter myself that you think so. Apropos,' added he carelessly, 'I have some deeds to settle, which the common forms of business will require you to sign. But we will talk of that this evening. At present I can think of nothing but the colour of your carriage; the varnisher only waits for your directions.'—'I will consider of it,' said she. And as soon as he was gone, she fell into reflections on what had passed between them.

Acelia was a rich heiress, and the law secured her the disposal of her fortune. She perceived the consequences of the engagement proposed to her; and in the evening, instead of going to the play, she went to her attorney. What was her surprize, on learning, that Melidor was reduced to the most ruinous expedients! She employed the time of the play in getting intelligence and advice.

At her return she concealed her uneasiness before the company at supper; but when her husband, *tete a tete* with her, proposed to her to

engage for him, 'I will not abandon you.' said she, 'if you will deign to trust yourself to me; but I require an entire confidence, a full power of ruling my house.'

Melidor was humbled at the thought of having his wife for a tutor: he told her, that she had no reason to be alarmed, and that he would not suffer her to take so disagreeable a charge upon herself. 'No, Sir, I have neglected too long: it is a fault which I will no longer be guilty of.' he gave up the point; and the creditors being assembled the next day—'Gentlemen,' said he to them, 'your visits are troublesome to me, my wife would be glad to talk with you; see and settle with her.'—'Gentlemen,' said Acelia to them, in a prudent, but assured tone, 'though my estate be my children's, I am sensible that I ought to assist their father with it; but I will have it done fairly. Those who are honest shall find me punctual; but I will not satisfy knaves for the follies of a spendthrift. Bring me your demands to-morrow. I require only time to examine them; I will not let you wait.'

From the moment that Acelia saw herself at the head of her house, she was no longer the same woman. She cast her eyes on her past life, and saw nothing in it but the flutter of a thousand idle occupations. 'Are these,' said she, 'the duties of a mother of a family? Is it, then, at the price of her honour, and of her peace, that she must pay for handsome suppers, rich equipages and brilliant trifles?

'Sir,' said she to her husband, 'to-morrow I shall have the state of your debts; I must have that of your revenues: order your steward to

come to me.' The steward came and gave in his accounts. Nothing was more clear ; far from having money in hand, it was found that he had advanced, and there was due to him above double the amount of his accumulated wages. ' I see,' said Acelia, ' that the steward understands his accounts better than we do. We have nothing to do but to pay him, thanking him at the same time that we are not more in his debt.'— ' To pay him!' said Melidor in a low voice, ' and with what?'— ' Out of my fund. The first step in œconomy is to turn off the steward.'

A reformation was instantly made in the household, and in the expence ; and Acelia setting the example, ' Courage, Sir,' said she, ' let us cut to the quick : we sacrifice only our vanity.'— ' But decency, Madam !'— ' Decency, Sir, consists in not dissipating the substance of another, and the innocent enjoyment of one's own.'— ' But, Madam, at discharging your people you pay them ; and this is exhausting our only resource.'— ' Be easy, my dear : I have trinkets and diamonds ; and by sacrificing only these ornaments, I make myself one which is well worth them all.'

Next day the creditors arrive, and Acelia gives them audience. Those of whom Melidor had purchased moveables of value, or superfluous nick-nacks, consented to take them back again, with a fair allowance. The rest, enchanted with the reception and good intentions of Acelia, unanimously agreed to abide by her decisions ; and her conciliatory graces united all minds.

One alone, with an air somewhat confused, said that he could not abate any thing. He had valuable effects in pledge; and on the list of monies borrowed, he was set down for an enormous usury. Acelia detained him by himself, in order to bend him, if possible. 'I, Madam,' said he, pressed by her reproaches; 'I come not here on my own account, and M. Duranson had better have excused me from playing this villainous part.'—'Duranson, say you! What, is it he who under your name—' 'He himself.'—'So our pledges are in his hands.'—'Yes, and a writing from me, in which I declare there is nothing due to me.'—'And may I have a duplicate of that writing?'—'certainly, and presently if you will, for the name of an usurer sits heavy on me.' This was a weapon for Acelia; but it was not yet time to enlighten Melidor, and incense Duranson. She thought it necessary to dissemble some time longer.

Her lawyer, who came to see her, found, that in twenty-four hours she had laid by a good part of her revenue, and discharged a multitude of debts. 'You proceed,' said he, 'upon good principles. Oeconomy is, of all resources, the most sure and the easiest. It enriches one in an instant with all the wealth that has been dissipated.'

While they were discoursing, Melidor in confusion afflicted himself at seeing his house stripped. 'Nay, Sir,' said his wife, 'console yourself: I retrench nothing but your follies.' But he considered only the world, and the humiliation of a fall. He retired in consternation, leaving Acelia with her lawyer.

A young woman has in business a prodigious advantage: besides inspiring hope and the desire of pleasing, she interests and disposes to a kind of easiness which men have not for one another. Nature contrives a secret intelligence between the two sexes. Every obstacle is removed before them, every difficulty vanishes; and instead of treating one another as enemies, like man to man, with a woman we deliver ourselves up as friends. Acelia was more than once a proof of it; and her lawyer exerted a zeal and affection in serving her, which he would not have had for her husband.

‘Madam,’ said he to her, on stating the balance of Melidor’s estate with his debts, ‘I find enough to acquit them. But effects sold in a hurry, commonly go at a low price. Let us suppose that his are free; they will more than answer the two hundred thousand crowns which he owes; and if you will engage yourself for him, it is not impossible to reduce this multitude of ruinous debts to a small number of more simple and less burdensome articles.’—‘Do it, Sir,’ said Acelia, ‘I consent: I engage myself for my husband; but let it be without his knowledge.’

The lawyer acted with prudence; and Acelia was authorized to contract in Melidor’s name.

Melidor had acted openly with her in every article but one, which he had not dared to declare to his wife. In the night, Acelia hearing him groan, endeavoured tenderly to comfort him. ‘You do not know all!’ said he; and these words were followed with a profound silence. Acelia pressed him in vain; shame stopped his mouth. ‘What!’ said she, ‘have

you sorrows which you dare not confide to me! have you a friend more tender, more sure, more indulgent?'—'The greater right you have to my esteem,' replied Melidor, 'the more I ought to blush at the confession which I have yet to make to you. You have heard of the courtesan Eleonora—What shall I say to you? She has notes from me for upwards of fifty thousand crowns.' Acelia saw with joy, the moment to regain the heart of her husband. 'It is not a time for reproaching you,' said she, with a folly of which you are ashamed, and to which my own dissipation has perhaps exposed you. Let us repair and forget our wrongs: this last is not without remedy.' Melidor had no conception that a woman, till that time so full of levity, should all of a sudden have acquired so much consideration. Acelia was not less surprized that a man, so haughty and vain, should suddenly become so modest. 'May it not be happy for us,' said they to each other, 'that we have fallen into misfortune?'

The next day Acelia, having considered well, went in person to Eleonora's. 'You know not,' said she to her, 'who is come to see you? It is a rival.' And without any farther preparation she told her name. 'Madam,' said Eleonora, 'I am confounded at the honour you do me. I am sensible I have done you wrong, but my condition must be my excuse. Melidor is to blame, and on seeing you I blame him myself: he is more unjust than I imagined.'—'Madam,' said Acelia, 'I complain neither of you nor of him. It is a punishment due to a thoughtless woman to have a libertine husband; and I have at least

the pleasure of seeing that Melidor has still some delicacy in his taste. You have understanding, and an appearance of decency and graces worthy to embellish virtue.'—'You view me, Madam, with too much indulgence; which convinces me of the truth of what has been often told me, that the most virtuous women are not those who are the most severe on us. As they have nothing to envy us, they have the goodness to pity us. Those who resemble us are much more rigid! they tear us to pieces while they imitate us.'—'I will tell you,' said Acelia, meaning to bring her to her purpose, 'what we blame most in persons of your way of life: it is not of that weakness of which so many women have cause to blush, but a passion still more odious.—The fire of youth, the relish of pleasures, the attraction of a voluptuous and unconfined life, sometimes even sentiment itself, for I can believe you susceptible of it, all this may have its excuse; but in renouncing the modesty of a woman, you are at least the more obliged to have that of a man; and is there not a kind of honesty which you do *not* renounce?'—'Yes, without doubt.'—'Very well; tell me, then, does that honesty permit you to make an ill use of the intoxication and folly of a lover, to such a degree as to require, and to accept of his mad engagements, that are ruinous to his family? Melidor, for example, has given you notes for fifty thousand crowns; and do you perceive the consequence of them, and how much room there is to be severe against such a seduction?'—'Madam,' replied Eleonora, it was a voluntary gift; and M. Duranfon can witness for me that I have re-

fused much larger.'—' You know M. Duranfon ?'—' Yes, Madam ; it was he that put Melidor into my hands ; and I was willing on that account to acquit him of his own promises.'—' Very well : he has set down his own article, then, to his friend's account ?'—' He told me so, and I imagined that Melidor had approved of it. As to the rest, Melidor was at his own liberty ; I have nothing of his but what he has given me, and nothing, in my opinion, can be more fairly acquired.'—' You think so, but would you think so, if you were the child that is stripped for it ? Put yourself in the place of a mother of a family, whose husband ruins her in this manner ; who is on the point of seeing him dishonoured, pursued, driven from his house, deprived of his estate, obliged to conceal himself from the eyes of the world, and to leave his wife and children a prey to shame and grief ; put yourself for one moment in the place of that miserable and distressed woman, and judge yourself, in that condition. What steps would you take, Mademoiselle ? You would, without doubt, have recourse to the laws which superintend our morals. Your complaints, and your tears, would put in their claim against an odious surprize, and the voice of nature and of equity would rise up in your favour. Yes, Mademoiselle, the laws would rage against poison ; and the gift of pleasing is poison, when we make an ill use of it. It attacks not life ; but it attacks reason and honour ; and if, in the intoxication which it occasions, mad sacrifices are required and obtained of a man, what you call free gifts are in reality robberies. This is what any other

would say ; what you would say, perhaps, in my place, yourself. But I am more moderate. There is somewhat due to you : I am come to pay you ; but nobly, and not madly. It is six months that Melidor has been your lover, and in giving you a thousand guineas, you will confess that he is magnificent.' Eleonora, softened and confounded, had not the courage to refuse. She took Melidor's notes, and followed Acelia to her lawyer.

' Would not you like,' said Acelia to her on arriving there, ' an annuity of an hundred guineas, rather than this sum in hand, which will soon be dissipated ? The way to detach one's self from vice, child, is to set one's self above want ; and I am of opinion, that you will one day be glad to have it in your power to be virtuous.'

Eleonora kissing Acelia's hand, and letting fall some tears ; ' Ah, Madam,' said she, ' under your features how amiable and touching is virtue ! If I have the happiness to return to it, my heart will owe that return to you.'

The lawyer, charmed with Acelia, informed her that the two hundred thousand crowns were ready in his hands, and that they waited her orders. She departed transported with joy, and on seeing Melidor again, ' There are your notes,' said she : it was very hard to part with them. Write no more so tender !' His friend Duranson was present ; and by the dull air of Melidor, she plainly saw that he had made him ashamed of having resigned himself to his wife. ' You receive them very coldly,' said she to her husband, ' considering they come from so dear

a hand.'—'Would you have me, Madam, rejoice at being the talk of all Paris? They speak of nothing but my ruin; and you make it so very publick, that my friends themselves are not able to deny it.'—'Your friends, then, Sir, had some way of remedying it without noise? They are come probably to offer you their credit, and their good offices? M. Duranson, for example —' 'I, Madam! I can do nothing; but I think that without such a disagreeable publication, it would have been easy to find resources.'—'Yes, resources which leave none! My husband has made too much use of them: you know it better than any body. As for the disgrace which you affix to the publication of our misfortune, I know how great your delicacy is, and I esteem it as I ought.'—'Madam! I am an honest man, and it is well known.'—'It ought to be known, for you tell the world of it; but as Melidor will have no more love-intrigues to form, your honesty grows useless.' Melidor, at these words, took fire himself, and told his wife, that it was an affront to him to insult his friend. She was about to answer; but, without deigning to hear her, he retired in a rage, and Duranson followed him.

Acelia was not the least shaken by this; and leaving them to conspire together, devoted herself entirely to the care of her family. Her son's governor, since their failure, thought his office beneath him, and plainly told them his mind. He was discharged that very evening; and in his place came a good abbe, simple, modest, and sufficiently learned, whom she entreated to be their friend, and to infuse his own morals into his pupil.

Melidor, whom Duranson had taught to consider the ascendant which his wife had assumed, as the utmost mortification, was incensed at hearing that the governor was discharged. ‘Yes, Sir,’ said she to him, ‘I give my son the example and direction of a wise man instead of a coxcomb; I mean also to rid you of an insolent parasite, who makes you pay for his pleasures. These are the injuries I do you, I confess them, and you may make them public.—‘It is odious,’ replied Melidor, without listening to her; ‘it is odious to avail yourself of the condition to which I am reduced, to prescribe laws to me. No, Madam, my misfortune is not such as to degrade me into your slave. It was your duty to enter into the engagement which I proposed to you: you have declined it; you are no longer dear to me, and your cares are useless. If I have run out, it was for you: the only remedy to my misfortune, is to remove the cause, and to-morrow we separate.’—‘No, Sir, this is not the proper juncture. In a little time you shall peaceably enjoy a reputable fortune, you shall be free, and easy, and happy.—Then, after having re-established your honour and peace, I shall see whether I ought to give place to the workers of your ruin, and to leave you, by way of punishment, at the brink of the abyss, whence I am now going to draw you. Till then we are inseparable; and my duty and your misfortune are inviolable ties to me. For the rest you shall judge to-morrow, what a man he is, whom you prefer to me. I will give you proofs of his perfidy, before his face; and I re-

nounce all claim to your esteem if he dares disavow them.'

Melidor, shaken by the generous firmness of Acelia, was distracted all night between anger and gratitude. But in the morning he received a letter, which threw him into despair. They writ to him that nothing was talked of at Court but his luxury, his extravagance, and the misfortune which was the fruit of it; that every body blamed him loudly; and that they proposed nothing less than to oblige him to quit his charge. 'Read,' said he, on seeing Acelia; 'read, Madam, and tremble at the condition to which you have reduced me.—Oh, my friend,' he said to Duranson, who arrived just at that instant, 'I am undone; you foretold it to me. The bustle she has made, dishonours me. They are taking away my place.' Duranson pretended to be overcome with the news. 'Be not afraid, said Acelia to him; your security is good. You will lose nothing by it but the monstrous usury which you would extort from your friend.—Yes, Melidor, he is our usurer, our lender upon pledges.'—'I, Madam!'—'Yes, Sir, you yourself, and I have the proof in my hands.—There it is, said she to her husband; but this is not all: this worthy friend made you pay Eleonora for the favours which he had received from her; he had the presumption to want to seduce your wife, by informing her of your amours, at the same time that he ruined you under a borrowed name.'—'Ah, this is too much!' said Duranson, and he rose to depart. 'One word more,' said Acelia to him. 'You shall be unmasked in an hour, known by the city and the court, and marked every where

with infamy, if you do not this very instant carry to my lawyer's, where I am going to wait for you, both the pledges and the notes which you have of Melidor's.' Duranson turned pale, was confused, disappeared, and left Melidor confounded, and immoveable with indignation and astonishment.

'Courage, my dear,' said Acelia to her husband. 'I answer for laying the storm. Adieu. This evening it shall be appeased.'

She repairs to the attorney's, becomes bound, receives the two hundred thousand crowns, discharges his debts, tears the bills, beginning with those of Duranson, who had prudently done as he was ordered. From thence she takes a post-chaise, and repairs immediately to court.

The minister did not dissemble his discontent, nor the resolution which had been taken to oblige Melidor to sell his place. 'I do not attempt to excuse him,' said she: 'luxury is a folly in our situation, I confess; but it has been my folly rather than my husband's. His complaisance has been his only fault; and ah, Sir, what will not men do for a wife whom they love? I was young, and handsome in his eyes; my husband consulted my desires rather than his own means; he knew no fear, nor misfortune, but that of displeasing me: this was his imprudence; it is now repaired; he owes nothing more than my portion, and I make him the sacrifice of it.' — 'What, Madam,' cried the minister, 'have you become bound for him?' — 'Yes, Sir, who ought to repair his misfortune, but she who occasioned it? Yes, Sir, I have engaged myself, but thereby I have acquired the right of ma-

naging his estate, and of ensuring my children's fortune. He does not know what I have done for him, and he allows me full power to dispose of every thing. I am at the head of my family, and the whole of it is already reduced to the most severe œconomy. Here, in two words, is what I have done, and what I propose to do.' she then entered into some details, which the minister was graciously pleased to hear. 'But, continued she, 'the friendship, the esteem, the confidence of my husband, all is lost to me, if you punish him for a fault with which he must reproach me till I shall have effaced it. You are just, sensible, and humane; for what would you punish him? For having loved the other half of himself too much; for having forgot himself, and sacrificed himself for me? I shall then be odious to him; and he will have reason perpetually to repeat to my children, the error and dishonour into which their mother shall have plunged him. To whom would you make satisfaction by punishing him? To the public. Ah, Sir! It is an envious wicked public, unworthy of that complaisance. As to that part of the public which is indifferent and just, leave us to give it a sight much more useful and more touching, than that of our ruin. It shall see, that a discreet woman can reclaim an honest husband; and that there are to well-disposed hearts, inexhaustible resources in courage and virtue. Our reformation will be an example, and if it be honourable to us to set it, it will be glorious to follow it; whereas, if the punishment of an imprudence which hurts us alone, exceeds the fault, and survives it, they will, perhaps, be

incensed to no purpose, at seeing us unhappy without being criminal.'

The minister listened with astonishment. 'Far from being any obstacle to your intentions,' said he, 'Madam, I will second them, even in punishing your husband. He must renounce all title to his place.'—'Ah, Sir!'—'I have disposed of it in favour of your son; and it is out of regard, out of respect for you, that I leave the survivorship to the father.' Acelia's surprize, at obtaining from the minister a favour instead of a punishment, made her almost fall at his feet.—'Sir,' said she to him, 'it is worthy yourself to correct, in this manner, the father of a family. The tears which you see flow, are the expressions of my gratitude. My children, my husband, and myself, shall never cease to bless you.'

Melidor waited Acelia with terror; and uneasiness gave place to joy, when he learned with what gentleness his dissipation was punished.—'Well,' said Acelia, embracing him, 'are we to part to day? Have you still any good friend whom you prefer to your wife?;

It is well known, with what ease reports in Paris are spread, and destroyed as soon as propagated: Melidor's misfortune had been the news of the day; his re-establishment, or rather, the noble part which his wife had acted, caused a kind of revolution in people's minds, and in conversation. They talked of nothing but the wisdom and resolution of Acelia; and when she appeared abroad, with the modest and free air of a person who neither braves nor fears the looks of the public, she was received with a respect which she had never before inspired. It

was then she perceived the value of the consideration which virtue gives ; and the homage which had been paid to her youth and beauty, had never flattered her so much.

Melidor, more timid, or more vain, knew not what air to assume, nor what countenance to wear. ‘ Let us wear,’ said his wife, ‘ the air of confessing frankly, that we have been imprudent, and that we are become discreet. Nobody has any thing to reproach us with ; let us not humiliate ourselves. If they see us glad of being amended, they will esteem us the more.’—‘ And with what eyes,’ said he, ‘ will you look upon the multitude of false friends who have abandoned us?’—‘ With the same eyes that I have always seen them ; as people whom pleasure attracts, and who fly away at it’s departure. What right had you to depend on them ? Was it for them that your feasts were made ? The house of a rich man is a theatre, in which every one thinks he has paid for his place, when he has filled it agreeably : the shew ended, every one retires, acquitted of all demands on them. This is a disagreeable reflection ; but in losing the illusion of being loved, you convert an agreeable error into an useful experience. And it is with this remedy, as with many others : the bitterness forms it’s efficacy. View, then, the world as it is, without being mortified at having mistaken it, without boasting that you know it better. Above all, let nobody be informed of our little quarrels : let neither of us seem to have given way to the other ; but let it appear, that the same spirit animates and actuates us both. Though it be

not so great a shame as it is accounted, to suffer one's self to be guided by a wife, I would not have them know that it was I who determined you.'

Melidor owed every thing to his wife, but nothing touched him so sensibly as this mark of delicacy, and he was so ingenuous as to confess it. Acelia had another view besides flattering the vanity of her husband. She wanted to engage him, by his vanity itself, to follow the plan which she had traced out to him. 'If he sees all the world persuaded,' said she, 'that he has acted only according to his own pleasure, he will soon believe it himself, as well as the rest of the world: we stand to our own resolutions by the sentiment of liberty, which resists those of others; and the most essential point in the art of leading people is, that of concealing from them that they are led.' Acelia took care, therefore, to reflect on her husband those praises which were bestowed on her; and Melidor, on his side, spoke of her with nothing but esteem.

However, she dreaded, on his account, the solitude and silence of her house. There is no keeping in a man who grows dull and weary; and before Melidor could fall into some employment, it was necessary he should have amusement. Acelia took care to form for him a society, not numerous, but well-chosen. 'I invite you not to feasts,' said she to the ladies whom she engaged, 'but instead of pomp, we shall have pleasure. I will give you a hearty supper, which shall cost nothing; we will here drink in freedom to the health of our friends; perhaps, also, we shall laugh there, a circum-

stance uncommon enough in the world.' She kept her promise; and her husband alone still regretted the opulence in which he had lived. Not that he did not try to accustom himself to a plain way of life; but one would have thought that the same void had taken possession of his soul and of his house. His eyes and ears, habituated to tumult, were stupified as it were with calm and repose. He still viewed with envy those who were ruining themselves, like himself; and Paris, where he found himself condemned to privations, in the midst of enjoyments, became odious to him.

Acelia, who perceived it, and who pursued her plan with that constancy which is found only in women, proposed to him to go and see the lands which they had bought. But, before setting out, she charged the lawyer to hire her, instead of the hotel which they occupied, a house genteelly plain, to live in at their return.

Of three estates, which Melidor had, the two most honourable produced scarce a third of the interest of the purchase-money. It was resolved, therefore, that he should sell them. The other having been long neglected, required only improvement to become an excellent estate. 'This is the estate we must keep,' said Acelia: 'let us employ all our care in raising it's value. It is a wholesome air, an agreeable prospect, and a fertile soil: we shall pass the pleasant part of the year there; and, believe me, we shall love one another there. Your wife will not have the airs, the caprices, the arts of coquets, but a sincere and tender friendship; which will constitute, if you partake it, your happiness; mine,

that of our children, and the joy of our family. I know not how it is, but since I breathe the air of the country, my pleasures are more simple and natural, happiness seems more within my reach, more accessible to my desires; I see it pure, and without clouds, in the innocence of rural manners; and I have, for the first time, the idea of the serenity of an innocent life, which flows in peace to the very end.' Melidor heard his wife with complaisance, and consolation diffused itself over his soul like a delicious balm.

He consented not without repugnance, to the sale of those of his lands, the rights of which had flattered him the most; and the good lawyer managed so well, that in the space of six months, Melidor found himself indebted to nobody in the world.

Nothing now remained, but to strengthen him against the bent of habit; and Acelia, who knew his foible, did not despair of extinguishing in him the relish of luxury, by a taste more discreet and satisfactory. The estate which they had reserved, presented a vast field for useful labours; and Acelia bethought her of forming a little council of husbandmen for the direction of them. The council was composed of seven honest, sensible villagers, to whom she gave a dinner every Sunday. This dinner was called, The Banquet of the Seven Wise Men. The council was held at table, and Melidor, Acelia, and the little abbe, assisted at the deliberations. The quality of soils, and the culture which suited them; the choice of the plants and seeds; the establishment of new farms, and the division of the ground into woods, pasturages, and corn-

fields ; the distribution of the flocks, destined for fattening and labour ; the direction and employment of the waters, plantations, and enclosures, and even the smallest particulars of rural œconomy, were treated in this council. Our sages, glass in hand, animated and enlightened each other ; to hear them, one might have imagined that one saw treasures buried in the earth, which waited only for hands to come and dig them out.

Melidor was flattered with this hope, and above all with the kind of domination which he should exercise in the conduct of these labours ; but he did not think that he had means sufficient to carry them into execution. ‘ Let us begin,’ said Acelia, ‘ and the ground will assist us.’ They did but little the first year, but sufficient to give Melidor a foretaste of the pleasure of creating.

The council, at Acelia’s departure, received from her a small recompence, and the good grace with which she gave it enhanced the value.

Melidor, on his return to town, was enchanted with his new house. It was commodious and pleasing, furnished without pomp, but with taste. ‘ This, my dear, is what suits us,’ said his wife. ‘ There is enough of it to be happy in it, if we are wise.’ She had the pleasure of seeing him grow dull at Paris, where he found himself confounded in the crowd, and sigh after the country, where the desire of reigning recalled him.

They went down there before the return of spring ; and the sages being assembled, they regulated the labours of the year.

From the moment that Melidor saw the ground enlivened by his influence, and a multitude of people employed in fertilizing it for him, he felt himself lifted above himself. A new farm, which he had established, was adjudged by the council, and Melidōr had the sensible joy of seeing the first crop.

Their joy was renewed every day, on seeing those very fields, which two years before languished uncultivated and unpeopled, covered with labourers and flocks, with wood, harvests, and herbage; and Melidor saw with regret the arrival of the season which recalled him to Paris.

Acelia could not resist the inclination of visiting the minister, who, in her misfortune, had stretched out his hand to her. She gave him touching a picture of the happiness which they enjoyed, that he was moved to the bottom of his soul. ‘You are,’ said he to her, ‘the model of women: may such an example make, on all hearts, the impression which it makes on mine! Go on, Madam, and depend on me. It is too much honour to be able to contribute to the happiness which you occasion.’

That fortunate country, to which our couple were recalled by the fine weather, became a smiling picture of œconomy and abundance. But a picture, still more touching, was that of the education which they gave to their children.

They talked in the neighbourhood of a couple like themselves, withdrawn from the world, and who, in a pleasing solitude, made it their delight to cultivate the tender fruits of their love. ‘Let us go and see them,’ said Acelia; ‘let us go and take lessons from them.’ On ar-

living they saw the image of happiness and of virtue ; M. and Madame de Lisbe, in the midst of their young family, solely occupied with the care of forming the understanding and the heart.

Acelia was touched at the grace, the decency, and, above all, with the air of gaiety which she remarked in these children. They had neither the rustic bashfulness, nor the indiscreet familiarity of childhood. In their address, their conversation, their language, nothing appeared but a natural excellence ; so very easy had habit rendered all the movements which it had directed.

‘ This is not a visit of ceremony,’ said Acelia to Madame de Lisbe : ‘ we come to take instructions from you in the art of bringing up our children, and to entreat you to teach us the principles and method which you have followed with so much success.’

‘ Alas, Madam ! nothing is more plain,’ replied Madame de Lisbe. ‘ Our principles consist in treating children as children ; to make useful things a play to them ; to make plain what we teach them, and to teach them only what they are able to conceive. Our method is equally simple : it consists in leading them to instruction by curiosity ; in concealing from them, under that allurements, the idea of labour and constraint, and in directing their very curiosity by certain thoughts thrown into their way, and which we give them an inclination of seizing. The most difficult is that of exciting emulation without jealousy ; and in that, perhaps, we have less merit than good fortune.’ — ‘ You have

given them, without doubt, excellent masters ?' — 'No, Madam, we learned whatever we wished to teach them. See how the dove digests the nourishment of her young ones. Let us imitate her; and from thence result two advantages, and two pleasures; that of instructing ourselves, and that of instructing our children.'

'This little labour is so much the more amusing,' said Monsieur de Lisbe, 'as we have reserved all the abstracted studies for the age of reason; and as our lessons are, at present, confined to what falls beneath the senses. Childhood is the age in which the imagination is most lively, and the memory most docile; it is to objects of these two organs that we apply the minds of our children. The surface of the ground is an image; the history of men, and that of nature, are a succession of pictures; the natural philosophy of tongues is only sounds; the part of the mathematics, to be perceived by the senses, is reduced to lines; all the arts may be described. Religion itself, and moral philosophy, are better learned by our feelings than they are conceived in idea; in a word, all our simple and primitive perceptions come to us by the senses. Now, the senses of children have more fineness, delicacy, and vivacity, than those of maturer age. It is taking nature then, in her strength, to take her in childhood; to perceive and seize every thing which requires not the combinations of the understanding; besides, that the soul, free from all other care, is entirely at leisure to attend to this; that is greedy of knowledge, exempt from prejudice, and that all the cells of the understanding and the memory be-

ing empty, we range the ideas there at pleasure, especially if, in the art of introducing them, we follow their natural order, if we are not in too much haste to accumulate them, and if we give them leisure to settle themselves each in their place.'

'I see,' said Acelia, 'but without terrifying myself at it, that all this demands a continued attention.'—'That attention,' replied Madame De Lisbe, 'has nothing constraining or painful. We live with our children, we have them under our eyes, we converse with them, we accustom them to examine, and to reflect; we assist them, without impatience, in developing their ideas; we never discourage them by a tone of ill-humour or contempt, severity, which is only of service to remedy the fault of negligence; has scarce ever place in an unremitted education; and as we do not suffer nature to take any vicious bent, we are not obliged to put it under restraint.'

'Shall I not be indiscreet,' said Acelia to her, 'in testifying to you the desire I have of being present at one of your lessons?' Madame De Lisbe called her children, who were employed together in a corner of the hall. They flew to the arms of their mother with a natural joy, at which Acelia was touched. 'Children,' said the mother, 'the lady would willingly hear you: we are going to question each other.'

Acelia admired the order and clearness of the knowledge which they had acquired; but she was still more enchanted at the grace and modesty with which they replied in their turns, at the good understanding which reigned among

them, and at the lively interest which they took at the interest of each other.

Acelia's object was to interest Melidor in this sight, and he was moved even to tears. 'How happy are you,' said he continually to Madame De Lisbe; 'how happy are you in having such children! It is the sweetest of all enjoyments.'

Acelia, on quitting her neighbours, requested their friendship; she embraced a thousand times their children, and prayed them to give her leave to come sometimes to instruct herself by their studies.

'What can be more astonishing, and more plain?' said she to Melidor, on going away. 'Can it be that a pleasure so pure is so little known, and that what is most natural should be what is most uncommon? People have children, and grow tired of them! and seek abroad for amusements, when they have such touching pleasures at home!'—'True,' said Melidor; 'all children are not so well endowed.'—'And who has told us,' replied Acelia, 'that heaven has not granted us the same favour? Ah, my dear, it is for the sake of sparing ourselves, that we so often reproach Nature. We generally blame her, in order to justify ourselves. Before we have a right to think her incorrigible, we should have done every thing to correct her. We are neither weak nor wicked; our children ought not to be so. Let us live with them, and for them; and I promise you they will resemble us.'

'You are going to have two assistants,' said she in the evening to the abbe. 'We have just had a foretaste of the pleasure of educating our children.' And she related what they had seen and

heard. ‘ We would follow the same plan,’ added she. ‘ You, my good abbe, you shall teach them the languages ; Melidor is going to apply himself to the study of the arts, and of nature, in order to be able to give lessons on them. I reserve to myself what is easiest and most simple, the manners, the objects of sentiment ; and I hope, in a year to be able to keep pace with you. You must shew us the sources, and direct our studies, step by step, on the shortest plan.’

The abbe applauded this emulation, and each of them set about filling his task with an ardor, which, far from weakening itself, only redoubled.

Melidor found no farther vacancy in the leisure of the country. It seemed to him as if time hastened his course. The days were not long enough to attend to the cares of agriculture, and the studies of the closet. One might have said, that these employments stole from one another. Acelia was divided, in like manner, between the cares of her household and the instruction of her children. Nature seconded her views. Her children, full of application, and docile, whether by the example of their parents, or through a mutual emulation, made their little exercises their diversion.

But this success, satisfying as it was to the heart of a good mother, was not her most serious object. She had ensured to Melidor the only inexhaustible resource against the dullness of solitude, and the attraction of dissipation. ‘ I am easy,’ said she, ‘ at last,’ when she saw him in a determined liking for study. ‘ It is a pleasure

which costs little, which we find every where, which never tires, and with which we are sure of not being obliged to fly ourselves.'

Melidor, restored to himself, far from being ashamed to confess that he owed his reformation to his wife, took a pride in relating all she had done to reclaim him from his errors: he ceased not to commend the courage, the understanding, the sweetness, the firmness, she had mingled in it; and all the world, on hearing him, said, 'This is a Wife of Ten Thousand!'

HOW happy they! the happiest of their kind!
Whom gentle stars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
An elegant sufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.
These are the matchless joys of virtuous love;
And thus their moments fly.

—— What is the world to them,
Its pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all!
Who in each other clasp whatever fair
High fancy forms, and lavish hearts can wish;
Something than beauty dearer, should they look
Or on the mind, or mind-illumin'd face;
Truth, goodness, honour, harmony, and love,
The richest bounty of indulgent Heaven.
Meantime a smiling offspring rises round,
And mingles both their graces. By degrees,
The human blossom blows; and every day,
Soft as it rolls along, shews some new charm,
The father's lustre, and the mother's bloom.
Then infant reason grows apace, and calls
For the kind hand of an assiduous care.
Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

——— The Seasons thus,
 As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,
 Still find them happy; and consenting Spring
 Sheds her own rosy garland on their heads :
 Till evening comes at last, serene and mild;
 When after the long vernal day of life,
 Enamour'd more, as more remembrance swells
 With many a proof of recollected love,
 Together down they sink in social sleep;
 Together freed, their gentle spirits fly
 To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign.

THOMSON.



YORK: PRINTED BY EDWARD PECK.